

The role of public relation in combating forged money in Ethiopian banking sector: the practice of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

In Ethiopia, recently the banking industry has grown fast. At the same time, different problems related to forged money and other criminal cases have increased in the bank sector. This in turn endangers the socio-economic development of the nations. Over the years, the Ethiopian government has taken several steps to address the problems of forged money. Public relations have a key leading role in combating forged money. The purpose of this paper was to assess the role of public relations in combating forged money: the practice of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE). The study predominantly focuses on answering how public relations practitioners combat forged money, what the tools and methods the public relations practitioners used to combat forged money, what the roles public relations practitioners have to raise awareness about forged money, and what is a change in knowledge, attitude, and opinion level about forged money as a result of public relation role. In this study, all of the required data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The study finding shows that the role of public relations in combating forged money was not efficient and effective in Ethiopia. The public relations practitioners and the bank are somewhat used to the poor communications tools that may be able to lead to various undesirable effects, such as information gap, public displeasure, and inefficient use of valuable resources. Besides, the role of public relations in raising the awareness of the public about forged money is not sufficient, and change in knowledge, attitude, and opinion level about forged money because of public relation role is not significant. The CBE also uses different communication tools such as press releases, press conferences, media relations, photo exhibitions, and others to reach the public which is not well organized.

Keywords: Public relations role; Forged money; Awareness raising; Public relations tools; Ethiopia

I. INTRODUCTION

Forged money and other financial-related crimes have adverse economic, political, and social consequences for countries worldwide in general and Ethiopia in particular [1]. These crimes weaken the financial systems which play a major role in financial transactions [2]. There have been many cases of forged money has been smuggled through to various parts of the world, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia [3]. The main potential stream for forged money is financial institutions particularly, banks if they provide a convenient route in which the forged money flows [4]. As a result, the financial institutions are the focal points where anti forged money programs are implemented to prevent the first forged money at their initial point. In the course of combating forged money among the banking sector, public relations has a vital role and one that needs special attention [5]. It has some significance to the success of a bank in decreasing the occurrence of forged money [1]. It provides an opportunity for banks to anticipate the adverse social and economic consequences of the problem [6].

Combating forged money crime is one of the primary goals of financial institutions and individuals societies as a whole [7]. To combat forged money, public relation has a great role and taking effective measures aimed at minimizing forged money in CBE [8]. The government of Ethiopia with its regulatory bodies such as the National Bank of Ethiopia, Federal Police Commission, and Financial Intelligence Center took the appropriate actions to comply with the international regulatory body that is Financial Action Task Force recommendations [9], by introducing the issue of forged money through proclamations and directive [8]. Public relations role to combat forged money among banking sector includes the use of public relations tools and methods such as social media, written, and

interactive public relations tools, awareness-raising and bringing change in knowledge, attitude and opinion of the public as well as the employee of the bank[3]. Despite evidence supporting the role of public relations in combating forged money, there is limited information about this issue in the Ethiopian banking sector and particularly in CBE[1]. To address this gap, the present study will examine the role of public relations in combating forged money[10]. Empirical evidence obtained from this study would provide a better understanding for public relations professions, particularly in combating forged money practice[11].

The roles of public relations in combating forged money in CBE have not been well established[4]. Rarely has been investigated about the role of public relations in combat forged money in the banking sector[3]. There still exists in Ethiopia wide gaps in understanding the roles of public relations concerning combat forged money among the banking sector[11]. Therefore, to fill these gaps this study will attempt to explore the role of public relations in combating forged money in the banking sector, specifically in CBE [12].

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

1.1. The study area overview

Ethiopia, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, is a landlocked country found in East Africa that has never been colonized in the Africa continent[13]. It is located at 8.626703° N, 39.637554° E and bordered by at North by Eritrea, at East by Djibouti and Somalia, at West by Sudan and South Sudan at South also by Kenya[14]. It has a total land area of 1.13 million km²[15]. It is the 12th largest country in the World and 2nd in Africa, with a total population of 114,080,804 at a population growth rate of 2.6% in 2020[16]. Ethiopia's current urbanization is 21.2% and its urbanization growth rate is around 4.63% yearly[17]. The mean minimum temperature is 6°C, while the mean maximum rarely exceeds 29°C[18]. Ethiopia, with an estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD\$84.36 billion in 2018, has the GDP per capita recorded at 772.31 US dollars in 2018[19]. The economy of the country has mainly based on agriculture, wherein the agricultural sector accounts for 50 % of national GDP and 85% of total employment[20]. The figure below shows Ethiopia is found in the Horn of Africa[12]. Ethiopia has 10 rural political administrative regions, namely, Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambela, Harari, Somali, and Sidama based on ethnic territoriality and two chartered cities, namely, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa [21].



Figure 1. Map of Ethiopia from Africa showing its political-administrative regions of the country.
 Source: Abebe et al. 2019; Dreamstime.com 2020.

1.2. Research approach

The fundamental idea of this paper is to analyze the role of public relations in combating forged money in the Ethiopian banking sector. The analysis ranges from the identification of public relations to combat forged money, the awareness role of public relations about forged money, change in knowledge, attitude, and opinion of public relations about forged money in the Ethiopian banking industry. To achieve the study objectives, all of the required data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data collected through a questionnaire from the randomly selected sample of individual employees of CBE situated in Addis Ababa city. Secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, both published and unpublished sources.

III. CRIMINALIZATION OF FORGED MONEY

Forged, according to thesaurus dictionary is the crime of falsifying or modifying writing that affects another person's legal rights or duties; simulated signing of another person's name to any such paper, whether or not it is also the forger's name [22]. Forged money is a type of counterfeit currency created without the state's or government's permission, usually with the intent of deceiving the recipient [4]. There have been many cases of forged money has been smuggled through to various parts of the world, especially developing countries like Ethiopia [22]. The main potential stream for forged money is financial institutions particularly, banks if they provide a convenient route in which the forged money flows [11]. As a result, the financial institutions are the focal points where anti forged money programs are implemented to prevent the first forged money at their initial point [23].

IV. THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS

Public relations as a profession has different duties and responsibilities in different organizations [9]. By helping to a common understanding between organizations and groups, public relations can assist a complex, pluralistic society in making better decisions and functioning more successfully [10]. At a fraction of the expense of advertising, public relations can have a significant impact on public awareness. Businesses, government agencies, trade unions, foundations, voluntary associations schools, hospitals, colleges, and religious institutions are among the many institutions that public relations serve [5]. These institutions must create effective interactions with a

variety of audiences or publics to fulfill their objectives, including employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders, other institutions, and the community in general [10].

The corporation does not pay for media space or time; instead, it pays for people to create and distribute material, as well as to oversee events. If the company creates a compelling story, it will be picked up by multiple different media outlets, having the same impact as advertising but with greater credibility [24]. In addition, stated public relations activities are needed to deal with local government, media trade association, and the general public [7]. The role played by public relation is not just to help the company sell its product or service but also to combat forged money through using public relation tools and method and by raising the awareness of the public how to combat forged money and finally bringing changes in knowledge, attitude, and opinion of the target audience on forged money [9].

1.3. Major public relations tool

Public relation tools used by the public relations department is to communicate with the public and target groups depending upon the nature of the activity and different target groups. Some of the major public relation tools are:

- **Publications:** - May include the interim report, annual report, and reports of firms meeting to influence the general background information to the reader about the overall condition of the organization [9]. Written and printed communication produces a higher level of comprehension to readers [22]. It incorporates objective ideas and goals by way of the production of booklets, brochures, and pamphlets [5].
- **Circulars:** - A circular is a letter generally sent to several persons or readers communicating some information or message. It is a simple, quick, and easy medium of communication to send a message to a target group of readers [6].
- **Face-to-face communication:** It normally produces a better result than written communication can do for interpersonal communication purposes. This essential feature is face-to-face communication, both of which are ideal for persuasion and achieving quickly [25]. People are some likely to believe if they are convinced and the face-to-face meeting to their direct media which can build up this are liability [26].
- **Information center:** Is multi-purpose in nature and provide in several services to the

organization as well as employees and also the members of the public outside, among the different purpose of the information center[27].

- **Company website:** Company website can be a good public relation vehicle[5]. Consumers and members of other public can visit the site for information and entertainment. Such a site can be extremely population[23].
- **Relation with the press:** Despite the emergence of electronic media like radio and television, a relation with the print media is oscillatory in public relations[25]. The press provides information and creates the climate and thereby influences attitudes[28]. Normally there are four methods to conduct press relations which include press releases, press conferences, facility visits, and letters to the editors[10].
- **Issue of day to day news:** This news particularly emphasized the contemporary development of the day[2]. It is considered one of the main duties of the public relations department of an organization to use as input for outside public relations[27]. Writing and issuing day-to-day news items is one of the easy and inexpensive tools of public relations communication. They are quick and effective, may include announcements, achievements, and notices[8].
- **Feedback:** Public relation is a two-way communication process[7]. It is the duty of public relations not only to disseminate information and ideas to the public outside but also to make a correct assessment of public opinion and reaction towards policies and programs of the organizations and bring them to the notice of the management[27]. Public reactions and response are very important for and origination and also the management to react suitably[25].

1.4. The role of public relations in combating forged money

At a much lower cost than advertising, public relations can have a significant impact on public awareness [3]. The organization does not pay for media space or time; instead, it pays for people to create and distribute material, as well as to oversee events [12]. If the company creates an interesting story, it will be picked up by multiple different media outlets, having the same impact as advertising but with greater credibility [4]. In addition, stated public relation activates are needed to deal with local government, media trade association, and the general public[10]. The role played by public relations is not just to help the

company sell its product or service but also to combat forged money through using public relation tools and method and by raising the awareness of the public how to combat forged money and finally bringing changes in knowledge, attitude, and opinion of the target audience on forged money[3]. Public relations practitioners attempt to influence the media agenda by providing news items for public consumption[24]. To accomplish this, they identify subjects that editors and news directors consider news, localize their messages, and help media representatives to cover the story[5].

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

According to the findings, forged money and other financial-related crimes have adverse economic, political, and social consequences for Ethiopia. These crimes weaken the financial systems which play a major role in-country financial transaction. This in turn endangers the socio-economic development of these nations. To combat these problems Ethiopian government has joined the fight against forged money in recent years. The government of Ethiopia with its regulatory bodies such as the National Bank of Ethiopia, the Federal Police Commission, and the Financial Intelligence Center took the appropriate actions to comply with the international regulatory body which is Financial Action Task Force recommendations, by introducing the issue of forged money through proclamations and directive.

Based upon the results of this analysis, the study revealed that the respondents disagreed that the CBE did not use all public relation tools and methods such as news releases such as print, video, and audio, websites and web-based communication, written communications tools, social media, and interactive resources tools to combat forged amounts of money. Public relations practitioners and the bank are not using effective public relations tools and methods to disseminate information to the internal public as much as possible to combat forged money and utilization of public relations tools is poor. The public relations experts did not communicate with the external public to create awareness about forged money. Besides, the study revealed that employees of the CBE had a low level of opinion, attitude, and knowledge about forged money. The finding of the study also indicates that change in the level of knowledge, attitude, and opinion as a result of public relation role is not adequate to bring change in knowledge, attitude, and opinion among the CBE employees.

Besides, the employees and public relations in the bank do not have good knowledge

about public relations tools and methods that are used to related to combat forged money. The public relation of the bank does not effectively play its role in raising awareness for the public and to employees of the bank. Therefore, the researcher can convincingly conclude that the public relation tools and method that are used to combat forged money is not well understood by the majority of employees of the banks and public relation practitioners in Ethiopia.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has assessed the role of public relations in combating forged money in CBE. The study revealed that the respondents disagreed that the bank did not use all public relations tools and methods such as news releases such as print, audio, and video, websites and web-based communication, written communications tools, social media, and interactive resources tools to combat forged money. In addition, public relations practitioners and the bank are not using effective public relations tools and methods to disseminate information to the internal public as much as possible to combat forged money, and utilization of public relations tools is poor. The study revealed that employees of the bank had a low level of opinion, attitude, and knowledge about forged money. The employees and public relations in the bank do not have good knowledge about public relations tools and methods that are used to related to combat forged money.

The public relation of the bank does not effectively play its role in raising awareness for the public and to employees of the bank. Change in the level of knowledge, attitude, and opinion as a result of public relation role are not adequate to bring change in knowledge, attitude, and opinion among the CBE employees. This paper concluded that the public relation tools and method that are used to combat forged money is not well understood by the majority of employees of the banks and public relation practitioners. To combat this forged money crime Ethiopian government must create awareness, change attitude, and use public relations tools to improve the nation's life.

Competing interests

The authors announced that there were no conflicting interests.

Authors' contributions

The manuscript was designed, prepared, and revised by all authors as well as the final manuscript was read and accepted.

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